1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

DEATH AT GANKWE

And so once more we were in Sedefo's canoe running the rapids, and once more we pulled up at the landing place. [764]

It was quiet enough there, and no one passing would have noticed anything out of the ordinary in the behavior of the one or two women washing clothes at the riverside, or of the children playing about in the water. Again we climbed the path to the village, this time to the delighted shrieks of the children, whose cries brought others, until we were surrounded by a fearless, clamoring group, shouting, calling after us, "Bak'a, Ame'ica' Bak'a!" Sedefo took us to his house, where we met the senior of his two wives, and turned us over to a young man, who had played one of the drums in the ceremony of the evening before, to show us the village. This was the routine of courtesy due any visitor. Nothing more tangible than a slight reserve marked the tension which made this village different from what it would have been on any midafternoon. [596] [595] [594]

In front of the house of mourning all was quiet. Three elderly men sat on their low stools, talking in low tones. They greeted us as we passed but neither engaged us in conversation nor offered us a seat. Inside the house the small fire still smoldered, and, where the hammock had been, now crouched, soundlessly, an old woman who, we later learned, was the dead man's maternal aunt. We were struck with the number of houses that had symbols of spiritual protection over their doors—*obias*, they are called—magically treated to keep the spirits of death from harming the occupants. As we passed one doorway, a woman holding a baby hastily threw a covering over its head, but not before we saw that it had special markings of sacred white clay on its face. The child was under treatment for some illness, and the mother, in these days when spiritual danger stalked about, could take no chances of the Bakra's magic obstructing the cure. [598] [755]

On the other side of the village, farthest away from the house of death, life flowed on yet more evenly. But as we looked about, our guide stiffened, and soon we too caught the sound of the drums which rapidly became louder. He

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enrich the soil. Now before a field is chosen for cutting, it must be surveyed carefully to see that there are no snakes to be injured; that no trees which have strong spirits like the silk-cotton tree, or the parasitic akatasi, will be destroyed; that no ant hill whether on the ground or on a tree be disturbed. But Kasanya's wife's mother's brother was careless, or unlucky. A small ant hill had escaped his notice.

"The *Akantamasu* god is powerful. It is a bad god," Kasanya said over and over, making of it a refrain to his story.

When the ant hill was destroyed, its spirit fixed itself upon the family. Kasanya's wife's mother became ill, and although the contents of one obia pot after another were used up in bathing her with sangrafu and the serabaki and chembe leaves, she did not get better. Her husband, an able obia man, made special charms for her to wear about her neck, and sprinkled her with medicine with the feather of the sacred opete, the vulture, but still her illness kept on. At last they went to a diviner. To the village of Dahomey they went, the village where the most powerful obia was lodged, and there she learned that the Akantamasu god had come to the family. The diviner told her how to serve the god so that she might have respite—the days that were sacred to him, the dances she must dance on these days, the sacrifices to make. They knew that it would never be a friendly god to them, for it had come as a kunu. There was more trouble and more. The family gave many offerings, and the possessed woman danced whenever the spirit seized her, but soon she died, and the others have been dying since.

"What happened to the man who destroyed the ant hill? Did he get the Akantamasu gadu?"

"No, not he himself. His mother, and his sister, and his sister's children."

"But why?"

The answer was that kunu worked that way, and he went on to tell us about his sons. The first son had gone to the

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"I have my obia from Lamé," Bayo had said. "People like me because of this obia."

When we came to Lamé we found that the people who inhabited it controlled more than the love obia. They had a powerful fighting obia, too. There was not only *bumba*, that gave power in love, but also *poitchi*, the obia that helped a man in a fight. But one who wanted to become a great hunter did not go to Lamé. Such a person sought out an obia man of the Dombi clan, who, working with the power of *mafungi*, helped him to see his game in the dark bush, though the animal was of the color of the bush itself, and, once having tracked it, helped him make his aim deadly. A man suffering from a bad gunshot wound would try to get an obia man from the Loango people to come and call on the powers of the Loango clan-obia to heal the dying man. For broken bones there was magic in the sacred village of Dahomey where centered the Kasito clan, and at Dahomey was also the best magic on the river for warriors. *'Bofyuando* and *sokoma'usu* were the two great warrior obias, and so powerful were they that if one but whispered their names, without taking the stems of two weeds, putting one crosswise on top of the other, and over them passing a coin to recompense for speaking the sacred names, the man who spoke would die. These obias belonged to the Kasito people, so strong in magic.

Of these clans there might be twelve or thirteen or fourteen. Among the Saramacca people, we learned, the clan partakes of the mysterious, the awesome. Our Bush Negro friends did not discuss their clans readily, and none of them would give us a list of their names. A few might be mentioned by one man, a few by another.

"To speak of the *lo* is not a thing for strangers," we were told. "My clan I can name, and another man can tell you the name of his clan. My father's clan I can name, too, but not others."

On one occasion we had made clear to a young man who had been away for some time in French Guiana, and who considered himself a man of the world, why we sought the

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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too, has a large pole outside of or in the clearing, which is used in praying to the god or to ancestors. The spirits of departed ancestors are invoked frequently and reverently.

Very often, when a man begins to hunt, he will call on the god and his ancestors for aid. The following prayer we heard intoned at the mouth of a creek, where a *gadu* pole was situated, by one of our paddlers who had entered to shoot fish. He clasped his hands, knelt down, and, with eyes closed, grasped the obeiah which was around his neck while he said the following words: *"Mooma nanga Tata nanga Massra Gadu. Me beh you mekki dem luku me kissi fu tru-tru wan anumara"*—"Father and Mother and Mr. God, I beg you make them see (those who do not believe) that I (you will allow me to) surely catch anumara fish."

The Djuka was gone about an hour. He returned with a fish weighing eight pounds. For this occasion he knelt in front of the praying pole and uttered the following prayer of thanks: *"Keh Massra Gadu, gran danke fu you, ala suma go nanga inye uh kun oto nanga bon. Gran danke fu ala den tuni, ala den sweeti muffo deh wey kissi. Gimme furu pekein. Gran danke fu you"*—"Oh, Mr. God, many thanks to you for all who go in and come out with good. Many thanks for all things, all good things to eat which we caught. Give me plenty (full of) children. Many thanks."

In almost every village one encounters a wooden post thickly smeared with white clay on which is placed an iron pot. This apparatus is sometimes under a small thatched roof. Certain herbs are put in the vessel in case of sickness. At

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

the white man has never been allowed to enter. A spirit named *Hini* hovers over the town, and it is he, not the Djukas, who would be offended by the presence of a bahkra. People seriously ill are brought to Dahomey from the surrounding villages. The witch doctors there, old women as well as old men, and occasionally a virgin, administer their potent charms. Only young married women are debarred from the profession of medicine among the Djukas.

Here also comes the Granman of the Saramaccaner tribe, to undergo the sacred ritual before making his annual visit to Paramaribo. He receives absolution from the Dahomey medicine men in preparation for his sojourn among the bahkras. The ceremony is known as *maker suka*, or putting himself in favour with the gods.

Our friend Abaisa, headman of Lombe, tells us something of the Dahomey rituals. To mend a broken bone the patient is shut up in a small hut with the doctor and three white cocks. The first fowl is killed by having its neck wrung, the blood from its beak running on the floor of the hut as a sacrifice to Amu, the ground god. The second fowl is cut open for inspection. If the bladder is light in colour the prognosis is good, but if dark the reverse is the case. The third cock has its leg bone broken at a point approximately corresponding to the patient's fracture. After this both the fowl and the human patient undergo daily treatment at the hands of the doctor, to the accompaniment of prayers to Amu and the shaking of rattles to scare off the evil spirits. The nature of the treatment could not be ascertained, but on the day when

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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755 the cock is able to stand up and crow the patient is said to be cured.

787 The killing of the white rooster and inspection of its bladder are performed also in order to foretell the future in other than healing situations. There are several methods of prophesying. In one of them a plank is supported on the heads of two men, and on it are placed various little bundles. A third man stands before the plank and asks questions while the men bearing the plank jump up and down. The Gadu (the spirit in the bundles) is supposed to reply with a yes or no, as indicated by the way the bundles on the plank move. The questions are put metaphorically and in such a way as to exclude the possibility of the plank bearers deliberately influencing the answers. After one man has asked several questions, the bearers run with the plank to another part of the village where further questions are put to it. The carrying 963 of this plank seems to be the prerogative of certain individuals, and only certain others understand the making of the bundles and the correct placing of them.

778 Not even Mynheer Wolff, who has lived among the Bush Negroes for many years and undoubtedly commands their profound respect, has been permitted to enter Dahomey. The headman or captain of Dahomey, interestingly enough, is named Songai. There is a district on the West Coast of Africa still known today as Songhay. The name is the remnant of a great Negro empire that once flourished in North-West Africa, near the Sahara Desert. This empire is thought to have had universities and astronomical observatories, wealth

796 /13 cont./
[782] committed. This feast, at which pigs and poultry are sacrificed, must last for four weeks and thus ends with the following new moon. They pray, dancing and singing, while from time to time they kneel in order to ask for blessings.

[778] In the place where their idol stands they plant long sticks in the ground at certain intervals, on which they let flutter a number of long narrow strips of white cotton in the manner of flags.

[781] They celebrate this feast, for which no costs are spared, with all possible solemnity; it is attended by old and young and is very important among them.

Chapter IX

Conceptions about Death and Eternity

775 They believe that at death the existence of the human being ends, but that the spirit of the deceased does not disappear altogether and remains among them for a long time. Also they believe in unlucky spirits, which, as a result of an earlier evil life, must wander about restlessly, while the life on earth of the peaceful spirits is supposed to have been free of misdeeds.

They do not assume rewards in the hereafter for good deeds; /14/ misdeeds, however, in their opinion, are punished with restless wandering about.

[755] They say that those spirits know all that happens, and that they can come in contact with them at their feasts, that they receive many a hint and information, and through concealed signs come to know remedies against diseases, to which they attach the fullest confidence.

Chapter X

Marriage and Marital Life

584 Their marriages take place with few ceremonies. Frequently young men and even men ask pregnant women, in case they should bring a daughter into the world, to designate that girl as their wife,

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262 milk. She does eat cheese, however, saying that there is absolutely no milk in it.

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Chapter XIII

Diseases, Afflictions, and so forth

164 The greatest affliction among them, too, is the lepra boasi (leprosy and elephantiasis Fuchs), venereal diseases, leg and body 757 pains, and sores. They cure themselves mainly with herbs, which they possess in great quantities and with which they frequently work with special success. They cut open abcesses themselves; in most cases they cup themselves, making the cups from small calabashes. [824] For many pains they rub themselves with spirits steeped in paradise seed (1) and with carapa oil, which they get from the carapa nuts (2).

1. Sem. paradisie Ningre koudre pepre from the Amomum paradise Afsel.

2. Carapa guianens Obl.

• 755 In difficult cases and dangerous illnesses, however, they ask for advice from the Cromantie gado, which can only be done by means of song and dance, on which occasion a great deal is drunk. [756] A wentie man (African idol-priest or priestess) qualified for this, or an influential person, is able by means of drink, song, and dance among the others to excite himself to such an extent that in a mad way, without consciousness of what he is doing, he makes superhuman leaps, turnings, and twistings with his body, jumps and dances in the fire, until he finally falls to the ground unconscious and, rolling like a tub, foaming at the mouth, utters the most repulsive and strange sounds, which lasts until he is finally put down somewhere for dead. So long as he remains lying without any movement or sound as if in a deep sleep, one may absolutely not come near him or touch him, but must always take care to keep out of his way in his course and not to hinder him in anything.

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955 When he lies as though dead, except only that his eyes sparkle and are completely turned in their sockets, at which time one frequently sees only the white and red, and he moves his chest panting for breath, then he is carefully brought to the place where the Cromantie gado is put, and where questions are put to him concerning the sickness which one wishes to cure, and where the sick person himself or, in the latter's absence, some of his most recently worn garments, must be.

These questions are put with a great deal of solemnity, and answered by /22/ the person lying there. Very frequently the very strange herbs named on this occasion had favorable results.

When they proceed to such cases, the sufferer is obligated, so long as he is not cured, to continue to use the medicines indicated, which frequently had the result that after all the sick person did finally recuperate after long suffering.

If he in the least way neglects the remedies indicated on this occasion, he may often count on it that for him there is no more help, because he has recklessly called on the Cromantie gado for recovery, without the requisite reverence and observance of the prescriptions.

However this matter may be regarded, it is certainly true that they firmly believe the desired outcome will not fail so long as one does not circumvent or neglect the prescriptions in any way.

It sometimes happens that someone, after his recovery, abstains for his whole life from something or other which was
953 ordered for his recovery. Many assert that the leprosy which they contract is to be ascribed to not paying attention to what was forbidden them or their parents.

786 Almost all Bush Negroes have wentie or excitations of the African idolatrous dance-madness, which one must see in order to be able to believe and understand it. They can frequently dance fully five minutes at a stretch in a hot fire, unclothed and barefoot, without burning themselves in the least and without any sign of singeing to be seen on them.

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by the effect of medical care, we shall take 1 January 1950 as the date of reference for the calculations of mortality among the Boni.

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II. — Demography of the Boni —

Census. — Estimation of Age.

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Method used. The demographic study of the Boni presents the difficulties inherent in all populations without civil records:

1. Difficulty of determining the ages of individuals;
2. Difficulty of determining for each woman the deceased children in relation to the surviving ones.

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We attempted to establish a local chronology by linking the ages of individuals to events of known date that had stuck in their minds.

More particularly we fixed the ages of the old men from the voyage of the explorer Crevaux (1877) and from the death of the grand man Anato (1891), the ages of middle-aged persons from events which occurred between 1915 and 1924, death of the grand man Ochi (1915), end of World War I (1918), hydroplane accident at the mouth of the Inini (1921), installation of a rose-wood factory (1925).

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The persons born after 1930 were placed without difficulty, for we knew a certain number of them as children or adolescents in 1948.

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[829]

Starting with a certain number of men whose age could be fixed with considerable accuracy, all the others, men and women, were placed by comparison. In fact, if the Boni do not know their age, they are able to say that they are, for example, two or three years younger than so-and-so (6).

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[755]

6. Their attention is brought to bear on these age differences because, if a group isolated in the bush is led to address a prayer to the ancestors for the curing of a sick person, this prayer has to be pronounced by the oldest person.

174 /30 cont./

613 1st. Lo = de facto grouping of rebels of any provenance,
614 which has in the long run split up into lineages but which remains
621 in the form of a common worship;

571 2nd. Lo = lineage, from the very beginning.
184

Conceptions Relative to Kinship and Marriage

769

[121] Ties between the individual and the ancestors. Before examining more deeply the social and family structure of the Refugee Blacks,
[184] it is indispensable to study what religious ties are implied between the individual and the ancestors. Here one is in the presence of basic beliefs which seem identical in the various tribes of Refugee Blacks of Guiana and of which their structure is the consequence.

[711] In the civilizations of Blacks Africa it is supposed that a current of life and /31/ strength circulates from the divinity to men through the medium of the ancestors. Among the Refugee Blacks it is taken for granted that in this respect each man is bound
[782] to his ancestors through the maternal line only. If he falls prey to illness, injustice, or adversity, he can call only on them in his prayer.

593 That does not mean that the tie with the father is ignored
[827] or considered as having little importance; it is taken for granted, as we shall see, that in the creation of man certain psychic elements are transmitted from father to son. But the current of strength binding the individual to the ancestors does not pass through the father. One cannot pray usefully to the soul of one's dead father.
[755] If I am sick and divination incriminates the action of my dead
[782] father's soul, I cannot address either prayer or offering directly to him; for that I shall have recourse to one of his near relatives in the maternal line.

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The great gods Gwangwéla and Gédéosu of the Djuka are not known to the Boni.

Strictly speaking, no cult of Masa Gadu exists. No edifice is reserved for him, he has no priests, and no collective ceremonies are conducted on his behalf. He is nevertheless constantly present in the religious life of the Boni, associated with ancestor worship. Every ceremony of ancestor worship includes an invocation to Masa Gadu. From time to time, for specific motives such as the illness of a member of the lo, people go /195/ specially to the fraga tiki to invoke Masa Gadu. The oldest man of the lo officiates, while a younger one pours a little water and tafia at the foot of the fraga tiki; the elder addresses Masa Gadu in everyday language, in simple terms, in a familiar conversational tone, asking him for the cure of illnesses or the end of calamities. Those present, seated in a semicircle, punctuate the end of the speech with some rhythmical applause, uttering the ritual formula of thanks: "Gaã tãŋgi tãŋgi fi yu, Masa Gadu."

Outside of these ceremonies which hardly go beyond the framework of the lineage, everyone may address Masa Gadu directly by praying aloud, if, for example, he finds himself alone in the bush and prey to an illness. One never addresses Masa Gadu other than for a specific material purpose. Inner prayer for the purpose of spiritual perfection does not exist to our knowledge among the Refugee Blacks.

One applies directly to Masa Gadu when one believes oneself to be the victim of an iniquitous action (see curse). However, although the Refugee Blacks have a very lively sense of justice, they never call Masa Gadu to witness for the cruel and arbitrary vengeances (kunu) which the lower divinities are believed to exercise on them. It is taken for granted that all these divinities do conforms to the role which Masa Gadu has assigned to them and that the suffering they inflict on men is indispensable to the proper working of the universe.

787 /201/
181 One also often finds as an avowed goal the idea of being useful to his lineage.

Disinterested mystical impulses appear totally absent from these cults.

787 But that is only one aspect of the phenomena of possession;
154 they really seem to be, in large measure, unconscious and
787 involuntary. Everyone can try to obtain a gadu, but everyone
797 does not succeed; one must have a certain predisposition.
[154] "One cannot oblige a gadu to enter a man," say the Boni; it certainly seems, in fact, that in nearly half the cases possession takes place spontaneously and sometimes to the great terror of the person concerned: this is observed especially in the kunu.

[776] Mimi, a woman about 46 years old in 1958, of the Kotika lineage, was possessed by two gadu, an Ampuku and a Papa gadu. Here is how her near relatives relate the fashion in which they came into her.

[158] About ten years before, Mimi was showing signs of mental derangement. Her mind wandered, she sometimes used to leave the village to run in the bush at random, she uttered disconnected words (1). Then she fell very ill (pleurisy?).

[828]
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1. It is necessary to note on this subject the very widely held idea among the Refugee Blacks, as among the Creoles, that certain forms of mental imbalance are due to the action of an entity which is trying to manifest itself in a man and does not succeed. In order to cure this man, he must be "washed" with appropriate leaves so that the god can come to manifest itself in him; the rest of the time he will be normal.

[755]

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787 784 If someone has a Kumẽnti, certain objects used in the cult: pestle, mortar, machete, must not be raised near him. His gita "would rise" immediately. Likewise while he is eating, neither tiger nor gun must be mentioned. To prevent their gita from rising, those concerned may take the precaution of putting a small piece of wood behind the ear while they eat.

787 178 [771] [781] [484] [743] [755] These past years the cult of the Kumẽnti was clearly declining among the Boni, as was the whole of their religious life; every one, indeed, no longer thought about anything but earning money and was always traveling in order to do this, which made difficult the indispensable meetings and dances. On the other hand, cared for effectively when they are ill in the Maripasoula hospital, the Boni feel the cult of the Kumẽnti less necessary, of which the principal social function is to cure. So, while in 1948 we used to be present very often at manifestations of the gita of Kumẽnti, in 1952 they were becoming much rarer and more secret /modest/. They were tending to fall to the level of the latent manifestations of which we shall speak further on. In 1956 we did not observe in the course of the forest [346] work any spontaneous attack of this gita. The chapels dedicated to the Kumẽnti are scarcely maintained and are falling into ruins; such is the fate of the gods judged benevolent toward men. [751] Nevertheless people continue to lay great store by the ɔbia of Kumẽnti, especially the man nẽŋge ɔbia which protects against the machete and the gun, and the Kumẽnti bui, ring of Kumẽnti, instrument of divination.

776 [823] [787] The Būnsuŋki. The Būnsuŋki are gods which live in the waters, by preference at the head of falls, beside rocks bearing copses of detached trees; they can also reside ordinarily in these trees themselves. They appear sometimes in dreams to men as well as to women in the aspect of Indians, more commonly Indian women with long hair. This is why they are sometimes called wata Iŋgi, Indians of the water.

/212 cont./
can read these messages; but we have not turned up any precise evidence on this subject (1).

1. These signs are very little systematized and have no relation whatever with the symbolic designs which figure in certain rituals of possession, especially in Dahomey and Haiti. It is permitted to see in them a simple likeness.

The Papa gadu are chiefly consulted to ask them to reveal the cause of misfortunes that happen. One of them is not asked to cure an illness unless the interrogation reveals that it brought it on.

The worship of the Papa gadu snake gods makes a strong impression on the West Indian Creoles who maintain regular relations with the Refugee Blacks. Most consider it as diabolical in nature and disapprove of it, but if the presence of an "adder" (anaconda snake) is noted in a neighboring creek, and if at the same time misfortunes occur, it happens that a Creole may go to ask the Refugee Blacks to practice rites to mollify the vengeance of the god. We have happened to catch sight of, hidden in a copse behind the habitation of a gold miner, a small altar decorated with blue and red pennants, the usual place of worship of the Papa gadu.

Observation in Boniville, November, 1952.

An Asisi woman, Tini, comes to Boniville to consult her adoptive daughter Pamasa, about 35 years old, who is possessed by a Papa gadu named Adawa. Féni, 15 years old, Tini's son, has been sick for several days (fever, eruption all over the body). When someone comes to get us, the god has already entered into Pamasa, has sat down in a hut, and

/212 cont./

755 is answering in ordinary language the questions posed. The sick [753] boy's mother asks the god if it is really he who made her son [784] ill. He answers that it is he and gives two reasons: first, a [824] week before, Feni damaged with a blow of the machete the root of a silk-cotton tree in which precisely he himself was living; moreover, his sister Pamasa was sick for 15 days, he did not go to visit her.

The mother begs the god: "Ubegi yu, yu abi leti, gi ɛŋ paadʒ, a 'ã be sabi bū-bū. (We beg you, you are right (but) pardon him, he had not realized well /what he did/.)"

Then the god directs a treatment: an infusion of a certain number of leaves, with which the sick boy will wash his body. It states that the sick boy will quickly get well.

Pamasa then comes back to her ordinary state. The scene has lasted about three-quarters of an hour in all.

164 Observation in Asisi, October, 1956.

On October 21 at 8 o'clock I am told that Bugi, a woman of about 45, is gravely ill; she suffers from violent pains in the chest and a general tremor. The sick woman is stretched out on the ground, supported by her brother and surrounded by old women who are comforting her. She appears to suffer atrociously, her body is covered with sweat, her lower limbs are agitated with an incessant trembling; she presents the symptoms of a 755 heart attack (2). In front of the house, the ɔbiaman are

2. Bugi had already been hospitalized in Maripasoula for a heart attack.

preparing a "remedy," /213/ for they suspect that this is a question of a manifestation of the Papa gadu of which Bugi is the bearer.

/213 cont./

755 A stalk of sɛŋgaafu twice bent in an elbow is arranged on the ground. A cross is traced in the dirt.

Centered on the cross is placed a large basin into which is poured infusions of leaves taken from several calabashes.

The sick woman, still prostrate and groaning, is seated on a stool facing the basin. The contents of the basin are poured slowly over her body while she is massaged. It is not a question of a remedy in the literal sense of the word; the sick one is "washed" to help the god to manifest itself in her.

I notice that while going back into the hut she trembles almost no more; the attack seems to be subsiding.

In the meanwhile someone comes to call me elsewhere and I cannot come back until half an hour later. I find the sick woman standing, smeared with pemba, in the middle of a meditative audience. The god has descended into her and is expressing itself in Papa language while she dances with slow gestures.

[787]

[753] [784] I am told that it has just given the explanation of the illness: it struck Bugi because she did not observe the kina given to all bearers of Papa gadu, to stay away from funeral ceremonies. Now, the day before yesterday, she had knowingly participated in the tukka dance around Kotoïda's coffin.

The ɔbiaman present beg the god to pardon, which it does after claiming a bottle of beer which it drinks through the mouth of its bearer.

152 164 753 784 Observation in Kormotibo, December 18, 1957.

On December 18 in the evening I find the village of Kormotibo in the clutches of terror. Several persons are sick from the effect of the kunu. Apaita, a young woman, has an enormous whitlow, following an accident; two women have been stricken with pneumonia.

/213 cont./

753 784 These misfortunes are attributed to the kunu exercised by a Papa gadu god, since about a hundred years ago an ancestress named Akonté involuntarily killed a dagɔwe snake [787] while fishing /nivrant/ a creek. In our day this god manifests itself in Alama (Dip. II, E1), and another Papa gadu, which says it is the descendant of the first, manifests itself in Apaita [755] (F9). It is the latter which, speaking through the mouth of Apaita, revealed that it was striking the village because nobody had danced for it for five years.

755 They called B..., obiaman specialized in the vɔɔdū cult. He surrounded the chapel of the Papa gadu with stalks [787] of sāŋgaafu placed vertically. He prepared an infusion of leaves with which the Kormotibo women who have a Papa gadu have just smeared themselves (they are four in number, including two outsiders to the Dipélu II lineage). It is a question of helping their gods to manifest themselves.

People are going to dance eight nights running, part of the night. The agida drum drawn out of the chapel is set up in working position. /214/

The rites carried out to neutralize the kunu are:

--Cleaning of the chapel;

--Decoration by means of stalks of sāŋgaafu placed upright all around /it/;

--Bathing of the sick with leaves believed to have the power of making the influence of the Papa gadu go away;

--With other leaves, on the contrary concentrating the maleficent influence of the Papa gadu in a calabash which is then carefully shut up in the chapel.

787 Possession by the Ampuku. It is much more rare, and personally we have observed it only twice; the possessed people make circles of pemba around their eyes and draw kinds of ovals on

[774] /216 cont./ The akka is an immortal divine element
[775] attached to a human person for the duration of his life and which, at his death, returns to the domain of the divine, no longer keeping any contact with men.

[828] The akka is the source of life from which the human personality is nourished, but it is not this personality.

The Refugee Blacks consider the akka as a personal protector god; they are apt to say mi gadu, my god, for mi akka.

The concept of the akka was spontaneously transposed by the West Indians into that of the guardian angel. They speak in Haiti of the "big good angel."

For Refugee Blacks the life, health, and destiny of a man depend above all on the akka; they think that if the akka went away, the body and mind of the man could not remain bound together; he would die or lose consciousness. This is, a little, what happens each night, for they believe that the akka leaves the body to wander, which brings on the loss of consciousness.

[754] /217/ So the wisimã, the sorcerer, tries to profit by this to capture the akka so that the man may become insane.

The akka is thought to have tastes, desires, and goals foreign to those of the personality and of which the man, in his
[753] ordinary consciousness, has no knowledge. The akka can make the man sick if he behaves in a way that it does not like. So
[755] when someone is sick, he resorts to divination in order to know whether it is not the deed of the akka and, in the affirmative, for what motive. One might think that the akka behaves like a conscience in the moral sense of the term; that it gets angry if its bearer does something evil. But in reality the akka shows itself to be as arbitrary, wicked, and venal as the lower gods of the Refugee Blacks. If it gets angry (they say: mi akka mãndi), this is because its bearer wears clothes of a color it does not like, or because it wants an offering. We have never, on the other hand, heard a case spoken of in which the akka might have become angry with its bearer because he was a thief, liar, or adulterer.

/221 cont./

775 828 [184] "My nɛ̃mseki is So-and-So." Mr. W. F. van Lier, speaking of the Djuka who have much clearer conceptions on religious questions, gives an important clarification: in 1915 Grand Man Oséisi became incarnate in a newborn baby of the tribe, nevertheless he continues to be invoked as an ancestor before the fraga tiki. It seems, then, that it is a case of certain elements of the personality which are believed to be reincarnaed, and not of the yɔrka as a whole.

787 It is important to distinguish the nɛ̃mseki from possession by a yɔrka. Possession by a yɔrka is an exceptional occurrence which is manifested in the form of trances, the yɔrka speaking through the mouth of its bearer; outside of these possessions, this yɔrka is believed to reside in the abode of the ancestors.

[613] A yɔrka can reveal itself thus only in a person of its matrilineage.

775 828 The nɛ̃mseki, on the contrary, exists in all men. The ancestor who is thus partially reincarnated is generally on the paternal side, but this is not an absolute rule.

A man is not conscious of his nɛ̃mseki and is acquainted with it only because his parents have revealed it to him. This nɛ̃mseki does not manifest itself in anything in everyday life; it does not impose any kind whatever and does not ask for offerings. However, when a young child falls ill, divination may reveal that it is the doing of the nɛ̃mseki which is indignant at being misunderstood. People hurry then, always with the help of divination, to find out the name of the nɛ̃mseki, proceeding by elimination. As a general rule, they allow themselves to be guided by resemblances of physiognomy, birthmarks calling to mind, for example, certain scars of the dead ancestor.

[753] [755]

It is believed that the older a man is when he dies, the more time he will allow to elapse before being reincarnated.

/225 cont./

784 One sees from this example how the influence of women,
613 exerted in arbitrary fashion, in a domain placed outside of
787 custom and ordinary social life, weighs on the life of the
562 group.

Kunu of the Dipélu lineage. The situation of the Dipélu
614 lineage with respect to the kunu is particularly interesting.
571 Although split for perhaps 100 years into two separate groups, Dipélu I (L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu villages) and Dipélu II (Kormotibo and Asisi-Dip. II villages), this group still constitutes an undivided unit with respect to the kunu. Neither time nor
[484] distance (it takes more than a week of traveling to make the round trip between L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu) has been able to
[755] break it up. The Apatu people come very often (at least some of them) to be present at the collective prayers which take place at L'Enfant Perdu to appease a kunu in order to cure a sick person.

The oldest kunu ("since Africa") is that of a Papa gadu
614 god whose bearer was ○ Dika (Dip. I, D10, † 1951) and which
224 passed after her death into ○ Péechina (Dip. I, E42, L'Enfant
[787] Perdu village). This kunu strikes indiscriminately the people of L'Enfant Perdu, Apatu, Kormotibo, Asisi-Dip. II, and the Dipélu fraction residing in Boniville. To it, these past years,
[761] have been attributed the death of ○ Way (Dip. I, E6, living
[753] in Boniville), the illness of △ Akwali (Dip. II, F7, Kormotibo village) and of ○ Bongo (same village).

Another very old kunu is the one exercised by the yɔrka
775 of a Surinam Creole who had settled with the Dipélu people a
614 very long time ago. He was suspected of sorcery and killed.
[603] Since then his yɔrka comes back regularly to exterminate the Dipélu.

/225 cont./

784 Having no known lineage (his family, if he had any, was
775 in Surinam), it had taken people of the Dipélu lineage as
614 bearers. The last was △ Denis † in 1938. Since Denis'
787 death, it no longer has a bearer. The questioning of the dead reveals that they died by its kunu. The members of the two
[782] fractions of the lineage meet together (at least two or three members of each village come) to supplicate it.

784 A third kunu, very interesting in origin and supposed
614 action, /226/ in 1957 was borne by Kwau (Dip. I, E1, Kotika village). It results from the killing of an anaconda snake by Apatu † (Dip. I, C1), companion of the explorer Crevaux when he was traveling to /in/ Brazil. Upon contact with Europeans Apatu had become a freethinker and was no longer
[153] observing the laws of his people. Among the later victims of
[155] this kunu was counted Kwami (Dip. II, F4, Kormotibo village) who, gravely ill, had had to go to L'Enfant Perdu where the god had been invoked for him and offerings made. The death
[161] of Manga (Dip. I, E5, Boniville, † about 1930) was particularly attributed to it.

No other kunu has revealed itself in Apatu village since its founding in 1882.

784 A fourth kunu concerning all the Dipélu has as bearers
614 women of the Dipélu II group. It results from the inadvertent
776 murder of a Papa gadu whose bearer was a dagowe snake killed
787 in the course of the nivrée /fishing/ of a pool by Akonté
562 † (Dip. II, B1), transmitted to Kondo †, then to Alama (Dip. II, E1).

Since then Papa gadu have revealed themselves in ○ Apaïta (Dip. II, F9, Kormotibo village) and in ○ Kaala (Dip. II, G28, Asisi-Dip. II village). They declared themselves to be the descendants of the first and to come in support of it.

/228 cont./

784 A kunu is exercised by a Dipélu yɔrka, borne in 1958 by
775 a Loka woman. It is invoked before the fraga tiki of l'Enfant
778 Perdu village (Dipélu I). Sometimes a broko dɛ is celebrated
768 for it in the same forms as the ceremony of the eighth day
613 after death.

784 We have likewise not been able to collect complete
613 information on the kunu of the Kotika lineage. This lineage,
114 divided into three fractions, forms a unit with respect to the kunu.

784 A kunu is exercised by the yɔrka of a Surinam Creole
613 assassinated in former times by a member of the lineage.
775 bearer in 1958 was Todo (K1, E68), a man of the Kotika l
780 living in Boniville. In 1958 a young woman of the lineage
[761] Awini (K1, E37), died suddenly; the yɔrka revealed that it
[684] had struck Awini because she had a liaison with Sintamann (K3, E145), thus committing pikadu. The idea of the collective responsibility of the lineage is so deeply accepted by the Boni that the near relatives of the dead woman did not reproach Sintamann at all.

784 /229/ A yɔrka of the Kotika lineage may exercise a kunu on
613 the Djuka. This is the case of an affair going back to 1950;
775 a young woman died some time after having a serious discussion
761 with a Djuka woman who had hit her. Deaths among the Djuka
619 these last years had been attributed to its vengeance.

784 It seems that there is no other kunu exercised by a Djuka
619 upon a Boni lineage and vice versa. This is surprising, con-
613 sidering the fights which in former times set the two nations against each other.

621 The Djuka and Saramaka living isolated in the midst
784 of the Boni know their kunu, which were revealed to them in
[755] childhood. In case of sickness, they employ divinatory pro-
[613] cedures in order to know what kunu is concerned, then they make offerings. But in case of serious illness, they are forced to go back to the village of origin of their lineage.

/242 cont./

754 Of course he was recognized as a wisimã by the first
764 adjuration made to his body carried in the papay on the heads
787 of two men: "If thou art a wisi man, do not come toward us."
The dead man drew back. /2__/

[784] /243/Continuation of the interrogation showed that he had not yet killed anybody, but that he had been killed by Odun when he was preparing to kill someone of his lineage.

754 The persecutors of Agyémési, contrary to their hope, did not recover after his death from the maladies which they were attributing to his sorcery; that did not shake their conviction in
755 the least. They left for Paramaribo to have themselves treated
648 by a Creole magician (for the Surinam Creoles, who practice white magic and black magic indiscriminately, are by this fact reputed to be more expert than the Refugee Blacks in combating the effects of wisi).

754 In recounting this story to us, the grand man told us that it is always necessary to be cautious with accusations of wisi
[762] because one can never be sure. A man unjustly accused can
[784] commit suicide and pursue his accusers with his kunu (most of the Boni state that they would do so in such a case). In former
173 times, the barbarous punishments in use in Africa were applied
683 to revealed wisimã: they were burned alive. But people tell
784 that one of them, some months afterward, undertook against his accusers' lineage a kunu which still lasts today. He had been
[198] wrongly condemned! It is through fear of the kunu more than through care for humanity, that these punishments have been abolished.

754 It certainly seems that the constant fear of the wisimã in
[152] which the Boni live is only a collective hallucination, and that rare indeed are those who dare to indulge in practices which might draw upon them such terrible social and religious sanctions. As for these practices themselves, they appear to be without any real content, and the misfortunes attributed to them are

754 181 178 [387]

/246 cont./
of his near relatives, his sister's children being regarded as the victims most pleasing to the demon.

Although in former times one to two out of ten deaths were attributed to wisi, in 1957 and 1958 out of 14 adult deaths of which we could obtain the explanation, there were:

[784] --Four wisimã killed by Odun, including two women of over 85 who during their lifetime had never been the object of unfavorable notice;

[761] --One death by the action of a wisimã,

or a total of more than a third of the deaths; out of the nine others, two were looked upon as natural deaths (dead of old age), seven were attributed to the kunu.

754 648 The Refugee Blacks and Creole magic. Some of them go to get from the lukumã what their own social morals forbid: vengeance or success acquired at the expense of other people. They have uttered an oath that prohibits the practice of wisi: for most of them it is clear that if they paid a piayeur /magician, sorcerer/ to harm someone, it would be the same as if they performed the sorcery themselves. But others make a mental reservation on this point.

754 755 648 In 1951, G..., of the Kotika lo, then about 20 years old, felt ill while staying at Saint Laurent. He went to find a Creole maïtif (clairvoyant) who presented him with a mirror, announcing to him that he was going to see in it the face of the one who had piayé /bewitched, cast a spell on/ him. G... saw nothing in the mirror. The maïtif was not upset at this and revealed to him that the piayeur must be someone in his wife's family. G... then recalled a dispute he had had some time previously with one of his wife's brothers and let himself be convinced: since that day he has not gotten along with his brother-in-law.

754 /246 cont./
755 The maltif asked 2,000 francs from him as the price of
648 his consultation.

789 Curse. Someone who judges himself victim of evil-doing has at his disposal a supreme resource: /247/ cursing his adversary, that is, appealing directly to the supreme God, Masa Gadu, to ask him to punish his adversary. This is called seni gadu -- sending God -- against someone. To do that, while asking God to kill him or make him sick, one kneels and strikes the ground with both hands in the presence of the adversary or in front of his house. This act is regarded as totally different from wisi, for one is relying on the justice of God, who judges with equity and punishes only the guilty.

However that may be, cursing is for the Refugee Blacks a very serious act. It may happen that, feeling guilty, the source of the injustice asks pardon and promises to make amends for his misdeeds. The one who uttered the curse again implores Masa Gadu in order to take back the words he spoke: "He has given me satisfaction, do nothing against him." But oftener still it happens that a complicated affair is involved, that both parties concerned are persuaded of their legitimate
[692] ground and curse each other. The case must then be carried before the grand man and straightened out at once or misfortunes
[695] may pounce upon both lineages. The grand man judges without appeal and inflicts a punishment on the one who was wrong
[778] on the main issue of the debate. Then he obliges the ad-
[762] versaries to be reconciled before the fraga tiki, where the offering of tafia and water is made.

[828] The effect of these conceptions is to render nearly im-
[754] possible hidden hatreds and rancors, which the Refugee Blacks fear very much, for they are the source of wisi.

688 In general, the act of getting angry in public and serious-
689 ly insulting somebody is considered as an offense against moral and religious law, capable of attracting misfortunes; it is an

/247 cont./

789 the object to which is attached a magic force, as well as that force itself. But there is no confusion in their minds; the object is only a simple support, it is nothing by itself. The traveler [755] who sees them prepare an infusion of leaves for a sick person may be tempted to believe that they attach to this leaf the power of acting against a certain disease; that would be an error, they attach to these leaves and to the white clay, pemba, the power of holding, /248/ of condensing the vital force which emanated from a certain god. It is the god which "makes ɔbia," and not men; men do nothing but collect this energy and apply it.

755 789 The Boni distinguish two categories of magic remedies:

--Those which come from a god through the medium of a possessed person. The god must be consulted each time, and the remedy it gives is effective only for the asker alone, and for a limited time; it can act only when the god has been paid, usually in the form of drink or piece of cloth; in principle nothing is owed to the possessed person (they admit that he benefits by the payment made to the god), but the custom is to give him a bottle of tafia.

Consultation of a possessed person is in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks the normal mechanism by which the ɔbia descends from the god to men.

755 776 Certain Ampuku gods might give remedies effective for a particular disease and for any asker, remedies which could be transmitted from one man to another. Unfortunately we could not obtain exact information about this.

755 756 --Those whose origin is unknown, and which have been transmitted from one man to another for a very long time. It is believed that these are remedies which were found empirically by a man in days past; this is the case with many remedies specific for this or that disease.

In such a case payment is made to the possessor of the remedy and to him alone.

/248 cont./

755 823 [794] White clay, pɔmba (the word and the rite are of Congolese origin), does not undergo any special preparation. In the thought of the Refugee Blacks it has the power to fix upon a man's body the magic influence of the infusion of leaves.

791 Among the Boni, except for the cult of Odun, there are no priests, strictly speaking, invested with a function at the same time social and religious. A large number of persons 756 791 are regarded as "knowing remedies." This notion implies at once knowledge and power. In general the ɔbiamɛ̃ is believed to hold only a specialized power: for example, he knows how to prepare a hunting ɔbia, or an ɔbia for protection against wisimɛ̃. This power he received from his father (as an exception, it seems, from his uncle), who instructed him, before dying, in the specialized rites it requires and transmitted his power to him by giving him mula.

To give mula to someone, one blows into his hands, one puts them on his head while uttering a formula by which one transmits to him a certain power or piece of magic knowledge.

What is the criterion of legitimacy? Who has the right to call himself an ɔbiamɛ̃? It seems that basically everything is reduced to this: the ɔbiamɛ̃ has the conviction, the sensation that he holds this power; as for his clients, they believe they observe the efficacy of his ɔbia; if they stop having confidence in his remedy, they will abstain from coming to ask it of him, that is all; no social prohibition comes to limit the action of [754] the ɔbiamɛ̃. The grand man intervenes only against someone who might claim to hold remedies to harm another person or to capture his will, which would be wisi.

[888] /249/ The Boni accept the possibility of deception as regards ɔbia, especially by people who are too young, but they have the conviction that the elders (people over 55-60) possess wisdom and that one can apply to them with complete confidence.

/250 cont./

751 Next in the preoccupations of the Refugee Blacks come the ɔbia called tapu, that is to say, protection. There exist numerous kinds adapted to the various dangers of a supernatural order (protection against other divinities, against the maleficent entities of the bush, against the wisimɛ̃).

[796] [754] The Ampuku are generally asked for tapu against the wisimɛ̃. We saw a remarkable one in front of the house of F... (Dju). Its owner was not a little proud of it and he talked about it to us freely.

751 798 [532] The ɔbia, placed at ground level in front of the door, was composed of a crude representation in clay of a head in which appeared two wide-open eyes: in front of it were planted in the ground three plant clusters including a planting of ground-nuts and one of maize; the whole was topped by a small basket containing an egg. It was necessary to water the ɔbia with a certain infusion of leaves at regular intervals to restore its force.

751 754 This ɔbia insured infallible protection against wisimɛ̃; in fact, none of them would have been able to cross the threshold without stubbing his toe on the door frame in spite of all his precautions; F... stated that his ɔbia constituted by this fact an effective means of detection of wisimɛ̃, for it was enough for him to invite suspects to enter his hut, to know what to think; the wisimɛ̃ refused, for fear of thus being given away in the eyes of all; one could thus at least pin down suspicions.

751 [411] Other ɔbia are called sama mɔfu tetɛ̃y (ɔbia against "people's mouths," that is, people's jealousy). They are nearly always seen on fine guns; they have a cord to hold them made of mɔriti palm fibers, to which two cowries are fastened.

755 The ɔbia intended to treat diseases generally have for support a calabash containing the infusion of leaves and a ball of pemba (kaolin). The person concerned sprinkles himself several times a day with this liquid.

/255 cont./

784 262 A... of the Dju lo, about 28 years old in 1958, must observe six kina:

--The cayman and the jaguar as bwasi kina.

--The otter (yundu) as akka kina. /256/

These three kina have been imposed on him since his first years, but the meaning of them was explained to him only later on.

[751] --The eel (mãnsi) was imposed on him as a kina by his father when the latter gave him a man nɛ̃ŋge ɔbia, ɔbia of protection against machete or gun, materialized by an iron bracelet.

[841] [834] To this ɔbia is attached another kina. A... must not speak to a woman having her menstrual period.

[751] [987] --Finally, the crab (kaabu), kina attached to an ɔbia of which the man concerned only spoke with reticence, probably a Kumẽnti bui (bracelet of Kumẽnti, instrument of divination).

A... has no gadu kina in the strict sense of the term.

There exists no food kina common to all the Boni; the cayman is generally forbidden to them as bwasi kina, associated with another animal; but this is not absolute; we know at least one Boni who has not received this kina.

If someone has broken a kina inadvertently, he can have himself cleansed of this offense by ɔbiaman. But if he broke it willfully, he cannot escape the punishment attached to the offense.

845 828 Beliefs about twins. They have the idea that twins and children who follow twins are of a nature different from other men, participating in a divine principle.

[755] Twins cannot live (since they do not belong to ordinary humanity) if they are not treated with a special remedy known only to certain lineages especially rich in twins.

/262 cont./

824 978 door; it was a particularly feared kɛ̃ndu that no thief would have dared to remove.

825 978 [776] --The Kɛ̃ntamasu are the divinities, especially maleficent and hostile to men, who live in the termitaries (these are termites proper, who make their nest in the earth, and not wood lice, much more common). There is one to each termitary.

[789] After a meticulous examination of the soil of the clearing, one marks all the termitaries /263/ and sprinkles each of them with a preparation containing leaves, pink clay kukusa, and manioc juice. One adjures the genie to go away, no matter where.

It happens that in spite of all the precautions taken a termitary is forgotten. Then, several days later, one will [789] [784] have the consternation of seeing the Kɛ̃ntamasu reveal itself in someone of the lineage; it announces that it is going to [782] exercise its kunu (curse). It is temporarily appeased by offerings of tafia, various drinks, red cloth.

796 198 787 The Kɛ̃ntamasu call themselves the Akɔ̃lo. Through the mouth of their bearers they speak a language nobody understands. However, when they wish to be understood by those present they speak Kumɛ̃nti.

● 755 784 Observation in Boniville, January, 1957:

A...., boatman of the border-fixing mission, asks for three days off. His wife, Masauman, has been ill for several days; divination (in this particular case the gita of a female relative in his lineage) showed that it was the doing of a Kɛ̃ntamasu injured in the burning of the clearing which he himself, A...., cut for his wife in October. The Kɛ̃ntamasu has not yet manifested itself directly, but a kunu threatens; to appease it he must put in action the remedy known only 000 to M...., an old man of Asisi. He will go to the spot, following

765 782 /263 cont./ He will go to the spot, following at a good distance M..., bearer of the remedy, with which he will sprinkle the surface of the clearing, and of offering objects. When the offering has been made, they will wait some time to see whether Masauman is better and if she is, they will deem the god appeased.

The Yali Festival

796 [805] The Refugee Blacks, who do not count the days that elapse, contenting themselves with lunations in order to follow the course of the year, make inquiries from Europeans and Creoles to set the time for the Yali festival which marks the new year. Everyone accumulates provisions, especially tortoise meat, varied drinks, and many firecrackers.

On the evening of December 31 each one dances in his own village.

The festival lasts all night, tafia gushes forth, firecrackers go off everywhere.

[787] At the end of the night several gods "rise" in the heads of their bearers, at least of those who are not completely drunk.

[535] During the day dances resume intermittently in the order awasa, sɔŋgɛ, suna. It is customary for the people of one lineage to go to dance in the village of another, then they [574] invite them back. People make many individual visits. Some have set up in front of their hut a sort of small buffet on which they have arranged about ten glasses, five to six liters of tafia, four or five bottles of beer, lemonade, and syrup.

Observation in Boniville, January 1, 1958:

The grand man, who scarcely leaves his habitation downstream from Boniville any more, did not /264/ put himself out. He delegated his functions to Lébiman and Fintiman, men about 50 years old, belonging to the fraction of the Kotika and Dju lineages residing in Boniville.